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ABSTRACT

This practicum developed a program to help students with disabilities to locate adequate employment, utilize community services, and live independently in the community. Practicum activities involved developing a comprehensive K-12 vocational curriculum, developing a policies and procedures manual for competitive/supportive employment, increasing parental support, developing a brochure describing the transition vocational career education program, establishing a county transition advisory board, establishing job training sites, training and placing secondary students with disabilities at job training sites, and training five job coaches. A total of 331 students with disabilities in grades 9-12 participated in the program. Students studied occupational skills such as resume writing and interviewing along with studying safety, use of hand tools, plumbing, electrical work, auto maintenance, small engine repair, carpentry, brick masonry, food service, business education, math for the work place, and English for the work place. Transition teachers located part-time jobs for program participants and acted as job coaches; these part-time jobs led into full-time jobs when the participants completed high school. Appendices include copies of rating scales and a summary of the vocational career education curriculum. (Contains 35 references.) (Author/JDD)

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ED 373 499

Implementing A Transition Career Education Program for Secondary Students with Disabilities

by

Shannon Harrelson Spring

Cluster XXXVIII

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A Practicum II Report presented to the Ed. D. Program
in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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Dr. Marion Chapman

Assistant Superintendent Cuuriculum & Instruction

This practicum took place as described.

Darlington County Schools

Darlington, South Carolina

March 24, 1994
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Shannon Hill Harrelson Spring under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

3-27-94
Date of Final Approval of Report

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ABSTRACT

Implementing a Transition Vocational Career Education Program for Secondary Students with Disabilities. Spring, Shannon M.; Practicum II Report, Nova University, Ed. D. in Child and Youth Studies. Descriptors: High School Education/Vocational Education/Transition/Career Education/Occupational/Supportive Employment/Competitive Employment.

This practicum was written to develop a program for students with disabilites to provide assistance in locating adequate employment, utilizing community services, and develop independent living skills.. The solutions of this program were to develop a comprehensive K-12 vocational curriculum; To develop a policies and procedures manual for competitive/supportive employment; To increase parental support; To develop a brochure describing the transition vocational career education program; To establish a county transition advisory board; To establish job training sites; to train and place secondary students with disabilities at varying job training sites; and, to train five (5) job coaches.

The transition vocational career education program was designed to enable all students with disabilities to gain valuable employability skills in entry level training sties through actual work experiences in or out of school. The purpose of the program was to assist students with the transition from school to work. Students who participated were eligible students within the nineth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade who had disabilities and who were working toward an attendance certificate.

The transition vocational career education program began with participation in the employability skills course. The course incorporated classroom assignments and activities with school-based work experiences. Upon completion of this course, students were promoted to the on-the-job training course which included classroom support and school-based or community-based work experiences. Support services in job placement and monitoring were provided through a transition coordinator and Job Coaches who maintained contact with students through the on-the-job training class and served as a liasion to regular education teachers, vocational education teachers, employers, and parents.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

Located approximately seventy miles inland from the Atlantic Coast, the county can boast a relatively temperate climate with typically mild winters; warm springs; hot, humid summers, and Indian Summers that linger.

This county offers much that larger metropolitan counties offer, yet it maintains a special southern charm and growth. It is the home of several major industries which are Fortune 500 companies. The county is the location of a small community college and the Governor's School of Science and Mathematics, as well as an International Raceway.

Despite these "big city" characteristics, the county is friendly with communities that have a good neighbor practically everywhere you turn!

The county is 605 square miles with a population of approximately 74,000 and includes four communities. The county school district consists of sixteen elementary schools, one middle school, three junior high schools, four high schools, two career centers, and two Alert (gifted and talented) centers.

All schools are fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, as well as the state department. The county school district educates 13,000 students, and employs approximately 1525 teachers and support staff. The district has an operating budget of $40,827,919.00

for the school year. The system has been legally desegregated since 1970.

The school system is governed by an elected twelve-member board of education who serves single member districts. Since June of 1981, the position of superintendent of schools has been appointed by a majority vote of the Board of Education.

The county schools serve a very broad constituency in several different geo-political subdivisions. Many of the schools in the county have a particularly long and rich history, tracing their beginnings to Reconstruction following the Civil War. Over the years the school system has seen rural schools closed and consolidated as urbanization has come to the area. This trend has continued in the present.

Recently the school system has been under heavy pressure to improve its pupil achievement as assessed by a variety of tests used by the state department of education. The majority of schools in the county have scored below state averages. In addition, there has been instability in the role of superintendent, caused by the tragic suicide of one and appointment of another within one year.

A public opinion poll of the county citizens completed in May of 1983 provided some insightful data regarding the image of the school system. Over 3,000 residents were asked to give the school system a letter grade. The largest response 43% gave the system a grade of "C." The next largest response 33% gave the county schools a "B".

On the question of taxes, 52% indicated they did not think taxes were spent wisely, 81% responded they thought that taxes for education

were "adequate" to "low," and 59% indicated they would be used for educational improvements.

The shifts in public opinion in the county point towards continued development. Partly as a result of nationwide reform movements and increased visibility of the adequacy of the county's public school the county's business community has expressed increased interest in the quality of the county schools. For this reason, a curriculum audit was paid for by one of the three largest industries in the county.

In brief, the auditors found a board of education and superintendent struggling to provide an improved educational program. Recent superintendent turnover has resulted in a good deal of instability in that office.

The auditors found an inadequate board policy framework for curriculum management, no long-range planning for the district as a whole, and an uncoordinated and ineffective effort from the central office to bring about curriculum focus and cohesion in the school system.

School principals had very little direction from the central office in the way of planning, curriculum development or coordination. There has been inadequate direction, control, coordination, evaluation and accountability in the county schools.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The school is located in a southeastern semi-urban town with a total enrollment of 1211 students (626 white, 585 black). The high school offers general, academic, and advanced placement courses, such as: French, psychology, Spanish, band, chorus, and vocational education courses. Students needing special assistance in course work who meet criteria for special education are served by resource or extended resource teachers.

The philosophy of the high school is based on the belief that the primary function is the development of each student as a functioning, contributing members of his community.

One hundred and ninety-two students enrolled in special education classes are classified as educable mentally disabled, learning disabled, trainable mentally disabled, emotionally disabled, or deaf. Secondary students receive instruction in a resource setting or an extended resource setting that targets basic skills or functional academics.

Special needs students at this high school are mainstreamed for vocational education classes, physical education, art, or music. Presently, there are four resource teachers, two floating teachers for the deaf, and six extended resource teachers. All teachers are certified and their degrees range from a Bachelor's of Science or a Master's degree.

They believe that each student needs to anticipate his future participation in the adult society of his community and should set appropriate goals. Each student should develop mentally, physically socially, emotionally, and ethically if he is to become a well-rounded

individual.

The writer serves as district transition coordinator. She possesses certification in the area of elementary education and special education The writer holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education and A master's degree in special education. Within this school district she is responsible for four junior high schools and four high schools. Her role is that of coordinator, resource person, consultant, and liaison. Duties and responsibilities are:

a. To plan and coordinate the transition of students from school to adult living and/or the world of work.

b. To coordinate all transitional services provided to student's with disabilities by the school and community agencies.

c. To assist with the interest and aptitude assessment of students with disabilities prior to job placement.

d. To coordinate the placement of all students with disabilities.

e. To serve as a consultant to all educational levels in the areas of vocational and life skills curriculum and implementation.

f. To develop and coordinate in-service training relative to special needs vocational curriculum.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Students with disabilities are not demonstrating the ability to locate adequate employment, utilize community services or live independently after transitioning from school to the world of work.

The reform movements of the 1980s successfully raised standards in this semi-urban district but has failed to prepare all youth with disabilities adequately for the requirements of the workplace. To a great extent, failure occurred because the appropriate and/or specific skills, knowledge, and behaviors demanded of workers today were never identified; It was assumed that providing high standards in the traditional basics would rectify the problem.

Many studies have confirmed the high unemployment rates among students of special education programs (Brolin, 1989; Department of Education, 1983; U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1983). Exceptional Education directors and coordinators within the state have reported that only a small percentage of students with disabilities become productive, contributing members of society in adult life.

Briefly stated, the problem is that Secondary students with disabilities are not prepared for adult life in the community upon exiting school. Forty-one out of 160 secondary students with disabilities will exit school this year (1992 Vocational Education Report).Many of these students may not be able to locate adequate employment, utilize community

services, or live independently unless assistance is provided in the transition from school to the world of work.

Problem Documentation

According to the 1991-1992 School District Attendance Report, approximately 20% of the students with special needs drop out of school each year. The Vocational Job Placement Report indicates that there are no job placements of students with disabilities. Three hundred and thirty-one secondary students with disabilities received instruction in a resource setting and received a diploma or attended an extended resource setting.

Because of the importance of effective transition planning, parents' expectations of their children's postschool living and employment situations might provide insight into their perception of service options(Bellamy, and Horner, 1987; Halpern, 1985). An inventory was sent to parent's of students with disabilities to investigate parents' perceptions of curricular programming for their child who was identified by the Exceptional Education Department as having a mild, moderate, or profound educational disability.

The purpose of the inventory was to assess (a) parents' ratings of their child's independence in four curriculum domains (i.e., academic, community, vocational, leisure), (b) parents' satisfaction with school programming in each domain, (c) parents' views of the priority for instruction in each domain, and (d) anticipations of postschool living and employment situations.

Three hundred and thirty-one parents were asked to indicate their

level of satisfaction with the school's teaching of activities within each of the four domains using the Priority Domains for Instruction Satisfaction with School, Postschool Living, and Employment (Figure 1) which is based on a five point Likert scale: 1 = very satisfied; 2 = satisfied; 3 = mostly satisfied; and, 4 = very unsatisfied. Parents' level of satisfaction was significantly lower within the community, vocational, and leisure domain than academic. Two hundred and ninety-two out of three hundred and thirty-one indicated that they were "very unsatisfied" with their child's instruction in the vocational domain. Whereas, 263 out of 331 were not satisfied with the instruction in the community domain; In addition, 196 out of 331 felt that they were satisfied with the academics but needed some improvements.

Ten classroom observations within the secondary schools were conducted by the writer. It was noted that many students were not receiving age-appropriate instruction; six out of ten classrooms were not environments which were conducive to eight out of ten were utilizing pen and pencil and ditto sheet activities; eight out of ten were not utilizing functional academics; and, eight out of ten were not emphasizing job-related skills during the day. For the most part, many exceptional education teachers within this semi-urban school district felt that it was not their responsibility to instruct students with disabilities in the area of employability skills. Their consensus was that it is the sole responsibility of the vocational education teachers or the special needs vocational coordinator.

Briefly stated then, the problem was that the secondary special education program within this semi-urban school district did not provide assistance to students with disabilities in locating adequate employment, utilizing community services, and developing independent living skills.

Figure 1

Parent Survey of:

Priority Domains for Instruction, Satisfaction with School, Postschool Living, and Employment

---

Using the scale, rate each question as follows: 1 = very satisfied; 2 = satisfied; 3 = not satisfied; and 4 = very unsatisfied.

---

1. I am satisfied with my child's academic program in exceptional education.

   1. . . . . 2. . . . . 3. 4

2. I am satisfied with the training my child receives about community services, activities, and programs.

   1. . . . . .2. . . . . 3. 4

3. I am satisfied with the instruction my child is receiving about career options.

   1. . . . . ..2. . . . . 3. 4

4. I am satisfied with the instruction my child is receiving about employability skills.

   1. . . . . 2. . . . . 3. 4

5. Upon graduation, my child will able to maintain and obtain employment.

   1. . . . . 2. . . . . 3. 4

6. Upon graduation, my child will able to live in the community independently.

   1. . . . . 2. . . . . 3. 4

Causative Analysis

The educational system has failed because it does not prepare students with disabilities for the future.

Evidence of this problem has been documented by reports, needs assessments, interviews, surveys, questionnaires, and the literature within the varying fields of study (i.e., Vocational Rehabilitation, American Vocational Association, Special Education, Foundations, Human Services, Psychologist, and Employment Coordinators.

Within the school district, fifteen percent of the students with disabilities drop out of school each year (1993-1994 School Attendance Report). Only two percent attend college while five percent are employed in full-time or part-time employment.

Over the past twenty years, the focus of many professionals in the field of special education has shifted from segregation to integration (Brolin, 1989; Rusch, 1986). The clear expectation is that special education services which culminate secondary school completion should endow graduates with the greatest potential to survive independently and succeed in the regular education environment and the adult world, whether or not they plan to go to college (Brolin, 1988).

The transition from high school to the world of work or postsecondary education is a difficult process for most people with disabilities (Wehman & Hill, 1984). For the most part, finding and maintaining community employment (Ianacone & Snodden, 1987) has proven very difficult particularly for all students with disabilities. The problem is not new.

For example, over 10 years ago, Wehman (1984), estimated that only 20% of the students with disabilities leaving school between 1981 and 1986 would secure employment. Wehman (1984) reported that only four million of the eleven persons with disabilities in the country at that time who were eligible to work were unemployed. At that time, many people with disabilities in the employed group were in low-paying or menial jobs. The unemployment rate for graduates at the secondary level special education program is presently reported to be about 40% (Wehman & Hill, 1985).

According to Brolin (1989), seventy percent of the secondary students are exiting school without any type of job skill, resulting in unemployment or low wages, and limited employment options (Bellamy, Rhodes, Mank, and Albin, 1988). Research indicates that too many young people in public schools, particularly youth with disabilities who are not college bound, are not well served by the traditional academic model.

In addition, approximately 30% of secondary students with disabilities drop out of school each year within the semi-urban school district (1990-1991 School Improvement Report).

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The rapid evolution of new and emerging values concerning children and adults with disabilities and their families since the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) vs Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Right to Education law suit was filed in 1969 has been exciting. Rusch (1990) explains, "In inclusive communities, we move from focusing on

services provided exclusively by agencies to support for involvement in typical community activities, based on the needs and choices of the individual. Disability service agencies work in partnership with community services, support networks (friends, family, and peers), and the person with a disability. The primary role is to help connect and support the individual in school, home, community, and work (page 125)."

Public Law 101-336, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) passed in July 1990, clearly recognizes persons with disabilities as full citizens and the need for inclusive communities. The language in the recently enacted Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act does the same. The 1990 amendments to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reflect the current paradigm in defining transition services:

> " a coordinated set of activities for a student designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from School to post-school activities including post-secondary education vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into the account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school living objectives and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living

skills and functional vocational evaluation."

The frustration is with what President Reagan described as a patchwork quilt or "federal maze" (1983) of programs, which continues to grow more complex each year. Despite the fact that the new paradigm is woven within these statutes, these programs have developed in piecemeal fashion. Each has its own jargon, culture, eligibility criteria identity, and agency turf. There is a fragmentation, there are inefficiencies, there is duplication, and there are barriers to the coordination of services and to interagency collaboration. Children, youth and adults with disabilities "fall through the cracks".

The Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires specific transitional services to be met for all youth with disabilities. Mandated by this new law, the school district must provide Individualized Transition Plans (ITP) for all students in special education no later than age 16 or 14 when appropriate. Implementing this new law creates barriers that cannot be overcome by a mandate alone. Research indicated that most special education professionals have not had specialized training in providing curriculum that prepares students for life after high school (Brolin, 1989; Wehman, 1987). Curriculum focus has been more on traditional remedial and academic approaches.

Vocational rehabilitation specialists, special education researchers, employment coordinators, and psychologists agree that many students with disabilities are unemployed or receive low wages (Brolin, 1989); have restrictive employment options (Wehman, 1989); are segregated from

nonhandicapped peers and community resources (Rusch, 1986); and, are underrepresented disproportionately in secondary and post-secondary vocational education programs, community colleges, and university programs (Wehman, 1989).

A review of the literature convincingly demonstrates that students with disabilities are not prepared in the early grades, middle schools, or secondary special education classes to achieve to their full potential which will enable them to become productive, contributing members of society. Furthermore, the problem was that special education program did not provide assistance to students with disabilities in locating adequate employment, utilizing community services, and developing independent living skills.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AN EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectation

Surveys conducted at the school where this practicum took place indicated that students with disabilities were exiting the program without skills to be successful in the school-to-work transition programs. The William T. Grant Foundation (1988) reported that approximately four million youth between the ages of 15-24 have disabilities. Only 55% of this group had completed high school, and the majority, 62%, were unemployed (Halpern, 1985; Repetto, 1987).

The goal was that students with disabilities would exit school with skills that would enable them to locate adequate employment, utilize community services, and live independently in the community.

Behavioral Objectives

The ultimate goal for all students with disabilities is competitive employment - employment that produces valued goods and services for all students with disabilities. Competitive employment or post-secondary training opportunities may not be attainable without a variety of time-limited services (Brolin, 1988; Wehman 1984). With this in mind, the following behavioral objectives were selected:

1. Students with varying exceptionalities exiting the program will demonstrate skills that will enable them to obtain employment.

2. Students with varying exceptionalities will demonstrate skills that will enable them to successfully participate in meaningful community activities.
3. Students with varying exceptionalities exiting the program will be aware of services available and demonstrate skills necessary to access these services appropriately.

Measurement of Objectives

It is estimated that 74 to 86 percent of graduating seniors with disabilities are currently either unemployed or not considered to be in the labor market (Wehman & Kergel, 1989). It was important that the measurement focus upon determining requisite behaviors that will subsequently be targeted for training and employment options rather than traditional assessment procedures (Browning & Irving, 1981). There were four evaluation tools to measure the objectives.

The first measurement of objectives was, The Vocational Career Education Curriculum Rating Scale (see Appendix A). This scale was submitted to all resource and extended resource and self-contained teachers at the designated high school. The rating scale offered an examination of the progress the cooperating teachers have made in educating all students with disabilities and will present an overall effectiveness rating of the implemented K-12 Vocational Career Education Curriculum.

Pre- and Post-test results of the Vocational Career Education Curriculum Rating Scale will be presented in terms of percentages (i.e., Mid-point, & Post-test).

Utilizing the vocational career education curriculum, teachers rated the curriculum and the program on a 1-5 Likert rating scale. The expected measure of success was a total of approximately 75% of the respondents rating the curriculum extremely effective. In addition, the writer believes that actual participation in school-based instruction, community-based instruction, and vocational education programs contributed to the success of students with disabilities enrolled in the program. Also, social validation interviews were conducted to determine if the acquired vocational career education awareness, knowledge, and skills were valued by the students with disabilities and other people playing significant roles in their lives.

A second evaluation tool was the utilization of behavioral observations. A component of the model required observation of behaviors that provided an indication of successful community participation patterns, positive affect while involved in community-based activities and other related choices. Social interactions were defined as verbal or nonverbal communication(s) when each person engages is at least one communicative term. Community participation patterns were operationalized by recording frequency of attendance, duration of active involvement, method of transportation, duration of supervision by other agency personnel or district personnel.

Positive affect is defined as demonstration of a smile and positive attitudes toward choices. Community-based activities/choices occur when students are given a choice between at least two viable alternatives.

Behaviors were examined on a regular basis (i.e., 5 out of 5 consecutive sessions per week) while secondary students with disabilities were participating in community activities. Observations provided useful information impacting program modification.

Social validation was the third evaluation tool that was used (Appendix B). If skills are to be considered functional, they should be valued by the person and significant others (Will, 1984). Based on procedures employed by Peck, Kullen, and Baumgant (1989), social validation interviews were conducted with secondary students with disabilities, parents, teachers, employers, employment specialist, and same age peers who do not possess disabilities. The intent of the interview was to assess meaningfulness, relevance, and usefulness of skills as perceived by significant others.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The secondary special education program within this semi-urban school district has not prepared students with disabilities to locate adequate employment, participate in community activities, nor become aware of community services. These are all necessary skills for independent living.

Research indicated the foundation of effective school-to-work transition was an appropriate delivery of services within the school . For it is during a student's school years from ages 5 to ages 18 to 22 that both employment and independent living skills must be systematically taught (Brolin, 1988; Wehman & Hill, 1985; Will, 1984). Effective school programming should result in both placement into a paid job and movement into an age-appropriate community living residence or an agency accommodation model (Repetto, 1987).

A number of approaches have been used to teach students with disabilities the skills needed to function in jobs and in other community setting. Historically, the first approaches were designed for persons with mild and moderate disabilities although these approaches were also applied to individuals with more severe and/or profound handicapping conditions (Phelphs, 1986; Snauwaert & DeStefano, 1990). Later approaches were developed specifically to prepare students with severe and/or profound disabilities to function as independently as possible in the school, home,

workplace, and the community (Brolin, 1989).

Over the past twenty years several methods have been utilized to ensure that students with disabilities are prepared to function as independently as possible. The curriculum components included: (1) career education; (2) vocational education; and (3) supported employment.

Career Education became a national education priority in the early 1970s. In 1974 the United States Office of Career Education was established. Three years after that the Career Education Implementation Incentive Act of 1977 (Public Law 95-207) provided federal funds that enabled schools to build career education into their curricular. Finally, in 1979 the Council for Exceptional Children founded a Career Development Division (Brolin, 1989).

All of these events underscore the belief that students with disabilities need systematic and longitudinal training in developing work and community adjustment skills. The career education approach typically evolves around 4 levels of skill development that primarily occur at once of three points during the school years (Brolin, 1989; & Will, 1984). During education programming, students with disabilities have an opportunity to learn the academic, daily living, personal-social, and occupational competencies, and specific vocational skills necessary for attaining their highest levels of economic, personal, and soical fulfillment. These competencies and skills are obtained and demonstrated during progressive stages.

The first stage is awareness. This stage includes opportunities for one to become familiar with the attitudes, information, and self-understanding necessary to the values of a work oriented society. The second stage is exploration. This stage includes opportunities for one to investigate the aptitudes, interests, and requirements necessary to fulfill various paid and unpaid work roles. Exploration is the third stage which includes opportunities to acquire and practice attitudes and skills that qualify one for paid and unpaid work roles. Finally, the last stage is assimilation. This stage includes opportunities to adapt to the demands and rewards of one's work roles.

Vocational education is usually a means of career preparation for regular students, but is available for students with disabilities in special education on a selective basis. The purpose of vocational education courses is to provide students with the worker attitudes, skills, and behaviors that are important for entry into a specific industry in the community. Vocational education enhances worker productivity while meeting the labor market demands of business and industry. Since the 1960s federal and state legislation has authorized funds earmarked for the vocational education of the disabled and disadvantaged students.

Research indicated there are certain disadvantages inherent in the use of this approach with students with disabilities. For example, Rusch & Mithaug (1986) pointed out that some of the occupations stressed in a vocational education program that also serves regular education students may be inappropriate for students with disabilities.

For a minority of students with disabilities existing career education and vocational training programs can provide the training and work experience needed in adult life. Environmental adaptations, instructional accommodations, and the use of adaptive technologies are only some of the strategies that teachers and employers may employ to ensure that students with disabilities become competitively employed (Bates, Suter, & Poelvoorde, 1986; Halpern, 1985; Phelps, 1986). In addition, a variety of special career education models have been developed that compliment existing vocational programs [c.f., Career Education for Exceptional Children and Youth (Gillet, 1984); The Experience Career Education Model (Larson, 1981); Life-Centered Career Education Model (Brolin & KoKaska, 1979; KoKaska & Brolin, 1985); Maryland School-Based Career Education Model (Clark, 1979; Goldhammer & Taylor, 1972)]. The combination of these programs ensured that purposeful and systematic planning lead students with disabilities to acquire employment and daily living skills for independence (Brolin, 1989; Clark & Kolstoe, 1991).

The tremendous growth of supported employment programs during the 1980s has been impacted by a variety of philosophical, judicial, economic, and legislative influences. Beginning with roots in the early twentieth century, growing through a controversial series of activities in the 1970s and finally becoming a nationally recognized and legitimate activity in the 1980s, supported employment programs continue to change and expand today (Wehman & Hill 1984).

Public Law 99-506 (Rehabilitation Act, 1986) defined supported employment as competitive work occurring in integrated work settings: serving persons with severe disabilities who because of their disability need on-going support services. The supported employment models typically include the following components:

1. Extended training in community-based settings;
2. Made available to those with moderate to severe disabilities;
3. Use direct instruction principles for on-going skill acquisition, increased productivity, and employment support;
4. Make use of organizational alternatives to make employment a reality;
5. Focus on social integration in business and industrial settings that approximate natural distribution; and,
6. Strive to ensure that wages and benefits are comparable to those of the nondisabled employee.

One important feature of this model is the ongoing support at the worksite. This support is provided by a job coach or an employment specialist. Job coaches provide this support by analyzing the work environments, and by providing on-the-job training. The job coach may also support community-based training and employment by advocating for those related services (e.g., transportation, housing, special minimum wage, etc.) necessary to gain full or partial independence.

Research suggests that any youth with disabilities experiences difficulties finding employment or other productive activities upon leaving school. The data collected on 8,000 special education exiters who had been out of school for more than one year indicated that fewer than 15% participated in post-secondary education or training, 17% worked part-time and only 29% were employed full-time. This problem is further demonstrated by unemployment rates ranging from 50% to 80% for workers with disabilities (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1983), a reported 8% of the gross national product being spent to fund disability programs that support dependency (Will, 1984) and the fact that even those individuals who are employed are most often underemployed (Repetto, 1987).

In response to these and similar statistics, Madeline Will (1984), then Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, established transition from school to work as a special education priority for the 1980s. This priority, entitled the Transition Initiative, led to publication of a variety of models for providing transition-related services to youth with handicaps (Brolin, 1989).

Most of these models have in common an educational base that includes the provision of appropriate life skills curricula, bridges that extend into the world beyond school delineating levels of potential support services, and types of employment and community settings available to students with disabilities (Wehman, 1984). It was assumed that the appropriate curriculum outlines through a transition plan would facilitate

a student's transition from school to work (KoKaska & Brolin, 1985).

In addition to the establishment of transition as a major national priority for the 1980s, several pieces of legislation have been passed to ensure the provision of transition services The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act (Public Law 98-524), The Education of the Handicapped Amendments (Public Law 99-457), The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Amendments (Public Law 99-506), The Fair Labor Standards Act Amendments (Public Law 99-489), The Social Security Act Amendments (Public Law 99-643), The Tax Reform Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-514), The Americans with Disabilities Act (Public Law 101-336), and The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Public Law 101-476). One interesting aspect of these legislative provisions is their grounding in several disciplines, which seems to indicate a strong feeling that transition services are only possible through cooperative efforts (Wehman & Hill, 1985).

However, the writer believes, even the best of these models, the most comprehensive of services and all of the legislation Congress can pass cannot help students with disabilities unless specific, long-range, and formalized planning and training for transition occurs.

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

The transition of youth with disabilities from school to work has become a major national priority, reflecting the interest of educators, counselors, parents,and agency personnel who are concerned about meaningful participation of youth with disabilities in education and training programs (Brolin, 1989; Wehman & Kregel, 1988). According to Brolin (1988),

transition planning is essential to enable youth with disabilities to bridge the gap between school and the valued adult role of employment, military service, independent living, marriage, and parenthood (Weinstein & Elrod, 1987). According to the research, transition will provide opportunities for the student with disabilities with choice, and an open range of career and learning options (Brolin, 1989; Wehman, Hill, M., Hill, J., Pendleton, & Britt, 1985).

The appropriate solution for responding to school-to-work transition needs of youth with disabilities call for a more functional curriculum that stresses training in social skills, career education, and vocational skills. In other words, a commitment by all special educators to teach a comprehensive vocational career education curriculum that emphasizes skill building for all of life's roles - workers, citizen, family members, and a person of leisure.

Report of Action

The writer implemented a transition career education program that is an outcome-oriented process approach that promoted and prepared students with disabilities for productive, successful adult living. Implementation of career education was a complex goal that necessitated action on several fronts. In previous research (Wehman, 1989), the goal of implementing varying curricular models was divided into five non-interlocking elements:

The transition career education program targeted those students who, by nature of their disability, would likely be unsuccessful in the pursuit of a career. The transition career education program targeted 36 students

for two-hour class blocks. An additional 90 students with Individual Education Plan's (IEP's) also received special in-class vocational assistance. Entrance into the transition career education program was determined during the initial placement meeting held prior to a change in the student's educational program. Upon placement in the transition career education program, a student's Individual Transition Plan (I.T.P.) was written by the members attending the placement meeting, one of whom was the transition coordinator.

The transition career education program consisted of 1 two-hour class at one of the high schools and a 2 two-hour class at the other High School in the district. Ninety students received instruction in occupational skills through various methods. These methods included role playing interviews, state occupational index system computer linking for career information, and writing resumes and job applications with teacher assistance. Occupational skills instruction was an on-going process throughout the year, thus enabling the students the best possible preparation for entering the work place.

Occupational skills included:

1) Motivation
2) Job finding skills
3) Writing resumes
4) Filling out job applications
5) Interviewing
6) Job keeping skills

A) Punctuality

B) Attendance

C) Personal hygiene/dress

D) Positive attitude

E) Interpersonal relations

While receiving instruction in occupational skills, the students spent three weeks studying: safety, use and identification of hand tools, simple plumbing, electricity, auto maintenance, small engine repair, carpentry, brick masonry, food service, business education, math for th work place, and english for the work place.

As the students completed the lessons of each individual unit, they visited businesses which utilized these particular skills. Speakers from each field were also invited to the class as units were completed. The transition teachers located part-time jobs for participants in vocational educational classes with area businesses and acted as a job coach when a job was found for participants. These part-time jobs lead into full-time jobs when the participant completed high school.

In compliance with Public Law 101-476, the writer ensured that the five elements (i.e., increase administrative commitment to the transition career education program; involve teachers - special, regular, and vocational in developing and delivering the transition career education program; increase intraschool and interagency coordination of transition services; increase parent involvement in teaching and reinforcing the transition career education program instruction at home and in the

community; and, develop community educational training, and work opportunities) were linked and/or interlocked into the following implementation tasks:

1. A policy and procedures manual was written and distributed to transition teachers and secondary principals regarding on-the-job training and placement of students with varying exceptionalities. The policies and procedures manual included topics relating to liability issues, transportation issues, emergency/medical procedures, course requirements and credits, laws relating to transition, procedures for implementing community-based instruction, examples of required paperwork (i.e., student/employer contract packet, business/ industry visitation packet and, job match analysis)(Appendix D);
2. A county transition advisory board was established to oversee the coordination of transition services and to plan participation for future services. The specific duties were: to develop an interagency agreement on service provision, assess local service needs and make planning planning recommendations for obtaining needed services, to develop a community action plan with goals and objectives which will focus on future needs of transitioning students, to coordinate and participate in public awareness activities with local businesses and community leaders, to advocate

the sharing of information among agencies, to discuss regular job networking in the transition planning process, and to establish a mechanism to address the needs of students with disabilities who do not have an IEP/ITP (who are not in "special education") but because of a disabling condition may need transition services ;

3. A district transition team (IEP committee with the addition of transition coordinator and agency representative) was established to monitor the effective transitioning of students 16 and older and included 14 and 15 year olds when appropriate;
4. A job training site directory was written for transition teachers, principals, students, parents, & business/industry representatives to give a listing of various participating sponsors of on-the-job-training and specific positions held;
5. A brochure was written to describe the on-the-job-training component of community-based instruction and was distributed to prospective businesses/industries, clubs/organizations, school district personnel, parents, and the community-at-large to serve as public awareness source of information (Appendix E);
6. The writer met with ten organizations and clubs within the county to promote community awareness regarding employing students with disabilities ;

7. The writer held in-service training at four junior high schools and four high schools to promote district awareness regarding employing students with disabilities, the components of Public Law 101-476, Carl Perkins Act, Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act and how it related to the students within the school district;
8. The writer established six job training and placement sites in the county to provide entry level training for students with disabilities;
9. The writer included interagency representatives in the county and school-based transition team to ensure effective program management across agencies and to ensure non-duplication of services;
10. A K-12 vocational/career education curriculum for the exceptional education teachers to utilize as a guide for community-based instruction, career awareness activities, career exploration activities, career preparation activities, career placement and follow-along activities, and, continuing education activities (Appendix F); and,
11. Parent training workshops and/or home visits to promote awareness of the program were conducted by the writer The ultimate goal of parent training workshops was to provide activities that parents can utilize in the home to aid in the generalization of activities learned at the school-based setting

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and the community-based setting.

The transition career education program worked within the writer's work setting because it served as a model program in assisting school personnel in developing a coordinated outcome-oriented framework within which individualized transition program planning took place. In addition, the program provided assistance in writing transition plans, coordinating transition training across agencies, personnel and time, expanding integrated leisure options, developing community-based training sites, initiating a full array of integrated domestic and daily living skills training activities, and obtain paid employment options where available.

CHAPTER V

Results, Discussion and Recommendations

Secondary special education programs did not provide assistance to students with disabilities in locating adequate employment, utilizing community services, and developing independent living skills.

The reform movements of the 1980's successfully raised standards in our schools but failed to prepare youth adequately for the requirements of the workplace (Wehman, 1984). To a great extent special educators have failed because specific skills, knowledge, and behaviors demanded of workers today have not been identified; simply, an underlying basic assumption has been that by providing higher standards would rectify the problem. In reality, work today doesn't require simply more or less of the traditional skills, but rather new and different skills (Wehman & Hill, 1985).

Results

Results are presented in relation to each of the three objectives addressed in Chapter III of this practicum.

Objective 1: Students with varying exceptionalities exiting the program will demonstrate skills that will enable them to obtain employment.

Objective 2: Students with varying exceptionalities will demonstrate skills that will enable them to successfully participate in meaningful community activities.

Objective 3: Students with varying exceptionalities exiting the program will be aware of services available and demonstrate skills necessary to access these services adequately.

The 11 components to the solution, as discussed in Chapter IV, assisted in the successful completion of the three objectives. Three hundred and thirty

one students with disabilities participated in the transition vocational career education program. All students were given the opportunity to receive school-based instruction which was followed by reinforcement activities of those skills within the community.

The students received instruction in employability and work adjustment skills thorugh various methods beginning at the ninth grade and going through the twelth grade. These methods included mock interviews between transition teacher and student, peer to peer, and students who graduated and were actively employed returned to assist with positive attitude, resume, application, and interview skills. In addition, businesses and industries were scheduled for each high school throughout the duration of implementation of this practicum, thus enabling students the best possible preparation for entering the workplace, participating in meaningful community activities and accessing appropriate community services.

School attendance records, discipline records, and report cards indicated that success had been met with the three objectives. For example, 320 out of 331 students with disabilities remained in school the entire year; 320 out of 331 students with disabilities maintained an 80% attendance rate; 320 out of 331 had a 25% decrease in discipline referrals; 320 out of 331 students with disabilities maintained a 70 average in all classes; 320 out of 331 participated in vocational education classes; and, 45 students with disabilities who expected to graduate after program completion participated in competitive and/or supportive employment activities. Furthermore, 27 out of 45 will continue with permanent employment after graduation, while 18 will be referred to other agencies for continued training and support.

The transition career education program worked within the writer's work

setting because it served in assisting school personnel in developing a coordinated outcome-oriented framework within which individualized transition program planning took place. The program provided assistance in writing transition plans, coordinating transition planning across agencies, personnel, and time, expanded the integration of leisure options, developed community-based training sites, initiated a full array of integrated domestic and daily living skills training activities, and obtained paid employment options for exiting seniors.

The vocational career education curriculum rating scale (Appendix B) results indicated that services were always initiated at the proper time; 45/45 responders indicated that services were always appropriate; 44/45 indicated that the length of services were appropriate; 45/45 stated that the goals were always appropriate; 45/45 indicated that the transition career education program produced the desired results; 45/45 indicated that the results were consistent with the IEP/ITP; and, 45/45 indicated that the quality of services were functional, age-appropriate, coordinated with the law, and prepared students for post-school activities.

Discussion

For students with disabilities, an integrated approach to career development is more appropriate than teaching job skills apart from other aspects of the curriculum (Phelps, 1986). Therefore, the transition career education program provided training of specific skills needed in particular jobs as well as a general orientation to the world of work. Relating academics to activities of daily living, competitive buying, banking, budgeting,and completing forms.

Generally, career development programs are based on various conceptual stages of career development (Wehman & Hill, 1985). The stages are

in the coverage of needed skills and habits (Snauwaert, 1990). The stages of career development experienced by an individual are influenced by many factors. The student's knowledge of general career information, familiarity with various jobs, levels of cognition, adaptive behavior skills, functional skill acquisition, self-concept, decision making ability, and parent's attitudes about work will affect how the student approaches and progresses through each level of career development.

A career development program for students with disabilities must encompass more than training for work. The curriculum and teaching activities must view career development as an expansion of the original definition of career education as being a totality of experiences through which one learns about and prepares to engage in work. For students with disabilities, the totality of experiences includes preparation to be a knowledgeable consumer, a participating family member, a responsible citizen, and a productive worker. Therefore, the entire currciulum can be used to develop career concepts, to teach academics in a functional manner, and to use other subjects to support and reinforce the skills necessary to facilitate the students' growth in vocational, social, personal, and cognitive domains. The success of the Practicum can be attributed to the following:

1. The transition career education program was responsive to the individual's needs, interests, and preferences;
2. The program balanced the need for maximum interaction with peers who were not disabled and critical curriculum needs;
3. Inclusive of the transitional needs of students across their schooling and life span;
4. Predicated on a realisitic appraisal of potential adult outcomes and subsequent environments (i.e., top-down perspective); and,

5. Sensitive to diploma tract goals, especially for students at the secondary level.

Recommendations

As a follow-up to information gained from this practicum the writer would recommend the ideas of: seeking board approval for a "a special diploma option" versus a certificate of attendance. The "special diploma option" should be presented with a set of competencies that would be attainable by the exiting age of 21 or when they were employable. In addition, a "special exit exam" should be developed based upon the desired set of competencies; and, transition career education should begin at the early childhood level with emphasis on the meaning of the world of work and the development of social competencies.

Dissemination

The writer disseminated this Practicum at the 1993-1994 school district inservice, the State Department of Education Fall Administrator's Conference, the 1993 and the 1994 State Council for Exceptional Children Convention, the district Education Fair, the Fifth Annual At-Risk Conference in Georgia, and with local businesses, industries, clubs, and organizations. The writer has been contacted to serve as a consultant for two state Pro-Parents groups, a school district in the north, and three school ditricts within the state to assist with implementing a transition career education program in their area. She will continue to conduct parent training sessions, and submit articles to Parent Magazine, The Exceptional Children Magazine, Exceptionality, Education and Training in Mental Retardation, and The Journal of Career Development.

In addition, by utilizing the format of the report and information contained therein, the writer has been awarded the following grants:

1. JTPA Title II-C In-School Youth Program - $40,000.00

2. JTPA Title II-B Summer Academic Remediation Program - $29,358.00

3. JTPA Title II-B Pregnant & Parenting Teens - $25,000.00

4. Carl Perkins, Community-Based Organization - $18,500.0

Also, the writer will be working with a national researcher and his staff of a rehabilitation & training center as a subcontractor to administer 200 self-determination instruments. The writer has been asked to write a collaborative grant with a national reseracher and his staff for the 1994-1995 program year. Upon request, the writer will make available the K-12 vocational career education curriuclum and the policies-procedures manual.

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APPENDIX A
THE VOCATIONAL CAREER EDUCATION CURRICULUM RATING SCALE

TRANSITION CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAM

QUALITY ASSURANCE CHECKLIST FOR

THE VOCATIONAL CAREER EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Using a 5 point rating scale indicate 1 = Almost Never; 2 = Occassionally; 3 = About Half of the Time; 4 = Usually; and,5 = Always.

---

1. Were the Transition Career Education Program services initiated at the proper time as per student's IEP/ITP ? 1....2....3....4....5
2. Were the Transition Career Education Program services provided appropriate ? 1....2....3....4....5
3. Was the length of Transition Career Education services appropriate ? 1....2....3....4....5
4. Were the goals stated for each Transition Career Education service in the student's program appropriate ? 1....2....3....4....5
5. Did the Transition Career Education Program services produce the desired results based on the student's individual needs ? 1....2....3....4....5
6. Were the results consistent with the stated goals of the IEP/ITP ? 1....2....3....4....5
7. Quality of services provided were functional, age-appropriate, coordinated with the law, and prepared students for post-school activities ? 1....2....3....4....5

APPENDIX B
SOCIAL VALIDATION INTERVIEW

TRANSITION CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAM

SOCIAL VALIDATION INTERVIEW

USING THE 5 POINT SCALE, INDICATE 1 = ALMOST NEVER; 2 = OCCASSIONALLY; 3 = ABOUT HALF OF THE TIME; 4 = USUALLY; and, 5 = ALWAYS.

---

1. My work in school will help me get a job. 1....2....3....4....5
2. My work in school will help me find places in the community. 1....2....3....4....5
3. My work in school will help me live independently in the community. 1....2....3....4....5
4. My work in school helps me with my attitude. 1....2....3....4....5
5. My work in school helps me to be a better person. 1....2....3....4....5
6. I am glad to be a part of the Transition Program. 1....2....3....4....5
7. School is important to me. 1....2....3....4....5

APPENDIX C
BEHAVIORAL OBSERVATION INSTRUCTIONAL EVALUATION SCALE

TRANSITION CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAM

BEHAVIORAL OBSERVATION

INSTRUCTIONAL EVALUATION RATING SCALE

DIRECTIONS: USING THE FOLLOWING RATING SCALE, RATE THE INSTRUCTIONAL ENVIRONMENT:

RATING CODE:
1 = ALMOST NEVER
2 = OCCASSIONALLY
3 = ABOUT HALF OF THE TIME
4 = USUALLY
5 = ALMOST ALWAYS

INSTRUCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ITEMS

1. Transition-related skills integrated within basic skills objectives. 1....2....3....4....5
2. Parental involvement encouraged in curricular decisions. 1....2....3....4....5
3. Classroom activities applicable to real-life, functional settings. 1....2....3....4....5
4. Concrete approach utilized to demonstrate problem-solving. 1....2....3....4....5
5. "Hands-On" approach utilized vs. pen,pencil/paper. 1....2....3....4....5
6. Classroom environment stimulates independence. 1....2....3....4....5
7. Classromm environment conducive to learning. 1....2....3....4....5

8. Teacher(s) is/are consistent with behavior management. 1....2....3....4....5

9. Teacher(s) encourage(s) self-management techniques. 1....2....3....4....5

10. Learning strategies are utilized. 1....2....3....4....5

11. Teacher(s) seek support of other professionals with regard to program planning. 1....2....3....4....5

12. Teacher(s) utilize cooperative learning. 1....2....3....4....5

APPENDIX D
POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

POLICIESAND PROCEDURES MANUAL
FOR ON-THE-JOB TRAINING AND
COMMUNITY-BASED INSTRUCTION

This manual was written to serve as a "quick-reference" guide for issues concerning on-the-job training and placement of students with disabilities in the workplace. Contents include:

*Laws relating to transition
*Job Desriptions for Transition Coordinator and Job Coach
*Liability issues
*Emergency procedures
*Job development forms
*Job placement forms
*Job follow-up forms
*Program management forms
*Quality assurance forms

APPENDIX E
TRANSITION BROCHURE

Transition Career Education offers:

Community-Based Training and Employment

How it works..

Provides opportunities for students with disabilities to work in integrated settings alongside non-disabled persons;

Matches the employer's needs to the worker s skills to create a good job match;

Emphasis is on obtaining employment and providing whatever individualized support is needed to keep that job through the use of a job coach;

Ensures long term on-the-job support and monitoring even after the worker has satisfactorily mastered the job skills.

Transition Career Education Benefits the Employer

Guarantees that the job is completed everyday to the standards set by the employer;

Provides tax credits for hiring workers with disabilities;

Surveys each employer's needs and trains the worker to fit those specific job requirements;

Provides a job coach to ensure the worker knows the job and performs it satisfactorily;

Costs of job placement, training, and follow-up at no cost to the employer.

Transition Career Education Benefits the Student

Creates opportunities for a more independent life for the student;

Allows the student to be integrated with non-disabled peers;

Builds self-confidence through success in work;

Creates productive members of the community;

Reduces employers stereotyping successful workers.

Transition Career Education Benefits the Community

Creates tax payers instead of tax users;

Reduces long term government costs through reduced needs for services through SSI benefits;

Reduces stereotypic beliefs about the unemployability of workers with disabilities and creates new attitudes.

For information, Call:

APPENDIX F
K-12 VOCATIONAL CAREER EDUCATION CURRICULUM

CURRICULUM APPROACH

The curriculum is built around the premise that all students should be assured success. This philosophy is built around these beliefs:

1. All students can learn and succeed.

   Becoming literate, self-sufficient, well-informed adults is within the grasp of virtually all students. Schools exist to foster these capabilities, to ensure their accomplishments, and to recognize and formally certify their completion whenever it occurs.

2. Success breeds success.

   How students experience their learning process affects their self-concept, motivation, and approach to later learning experiences. Providing students with the opportunity to succeed and formally acknowledging their learning successes on their own terms encourages students to seek further learning experiences.

3. Schools control the conditions of success.

   Schools directly control instructional practices, the structure and availability of the curriculum, instructional time and opportunities, assessment measures, grading and credit practices, and opportunities for program advancement. Each of these plays a significant role in the educational success of students.

GROUPING/PLACEMENT

1. Students shall be organized and grouped for instruction in ways which promote the progress of individual students.

2. Grouping should be as flexible as possible with provision for altering the grouping as often as necessary to fit the specific purpose involved.

High School
Year One:

*Personal, social, job readiness
*Job finding skills
*Maintaining and improving job performance
*Job search
*Preparing a resume'
*Application forms
*Classroom -based job activities

Year Two:

*Personal, social, job readiness through conflict resolution
*Reading to locate jobs
*Health and safety
*Compensation and benefits
*Tables, graphs, charts
*Health and safety
*Equipment

Year Three:

*Social skills training
*Interests and abilities
*Planning for job procurement
*Job application process
*Job acquisition techniques
*Independent living
*On-thejob success
*School-based instruction

Year Four:

*Job readiness
*Job acquisition
*Independent living
*Consumer skills
*Financial management
*Job retention

K-12 VOCATIONAL CAREER EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The K-12 curriuclum was written to provide teachers from elementary - junior high school a coordinated, comprehensive, and functional approach to teaching career education. All goals, objectives, and activities were written to be taught within the school and then in the community. Contents inlcude:

Elementary, Level:

*Basic Information
*Survival Skills
*Personal Independence
*Keeping yourself clean
*Cleaning your room
*Food and eating
*Healthy lifestyle
*Latchkey living
*Communityindependence
*Getting around
*Getting along with others

Junior High:

*Social skills
*Career awareness
*Career bexploration
*School-based buisness
*Relating careers to school
*Computer skills
*Obtaining and maintaining employment